***Press* Release**

The Meteorological Office

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Warm globally, warm nationally, at the end of the millennium

Scientists at The Met. Office's Hadley Centre and the University of East Anglia have shown that, globally, 1999 was the fifth warmest year in the record of observations stretching back to 1860. This message is contained in a press release issued today by the World Meteorological Organization, Geneva, and is based on the UK analysis of data from all over the globe. Global temperatures were about 0.33°C higher than the average for 1961-90, and about 0.7°C higher than those at the end of the last century. Seven of the top 10 warmest years have been in the 1990s.

The Met. Office's David Parker says: "The rapid cooling of temperatures in the equatorial Pacific, the so-called La Niña, has contributed to 1999 being significantly cooler than 1998, the hottest year on record. This large natural year-to-year variability is exactly what we expect to see superimposed on a long-term warming due to man-made greenhouse gas emissions. Our forecast for 2000 shows a high probability of it being warmer than 1999, as the cold Pacific slowly warms again naturally, but only a low probability of beating the 1998 record."

Phil Jones of the University of East Anglia comments: "Although we do not have instrumental records going back further than the mid-19th century, our analysis of tree rings, ice cores, corals and historical records from around the world indicates that the 1990s were the warmest decade of the millennium."

Closer to home, the Central England Temperature is on track to break all records and be the warmest since observations began in 1659, beating the previous warmest of 1990. Although this record bid could be threatened if there is a very cold snap in the last week of the millennium, 1999 is certain to be one of the warmest years observed.

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